

They have my gratitude, and America is lucky to have them.

Mr. BAUCUS. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE ALL-NIGHT DISASTER VIGIL

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I want to take a couple of minutes of the time allotted to thank so many of our colleagues from both sides of the Congress for their participation in our all-night vigil last night.

We began at 6 o'clock yesterday evening and worked through until 9 o'clock this morning, nonstop. We had about 25 Senators who participated, Senators from all over the country, and some Senators from States that were not affected by the disaster, not included in the supplemental legislation. We had Members of the House of Representatives who participated and came all the way over to express their concern and to participate. I am told we had close to 50 Members of Congress who participated throughout the night. Many of them stayed up all night. I myself had the opportunity to get a couple hours of sleep.

Especially, I want to thank all of the leadership committee staff for the tremendous job that they did, the DTCC staff, the DPC staff, certainly the steering coordination people, and my staff in the leadership office. They deserve our commendation and a heartfelt thanks for all of the work they did in bringing this about. We had the opportunity, as some of my colleagues have already noted, to talk to people around the country and express to them our sincere hope that they know how hard it is sometimes to get this legislation back on track, but also recognize how desirous we are of making that happen soon.

I have had the opportunity to talk to Senator LOTT this morning. I am hopeful that as a result of our conversation and the conversations that I know he is having with other Members, especially on the House side, that we might actually find some way to reach an agreement sometime before the end of the day. I think that is possible. I think there still has to be a lot of good discussion and good-faith effort to try to find a compromise procedurally. But I certainly am hopeful that can be done today.

Last night we talked to people who simply said that they cannot wait any longer, and there are those who said that the problem they are concerned about now is the very short timeframe that we have within which to do any

real construction work in the Dakotas and Minnesota. We have no more than 120 to 125 days. In some cases it is less than 100 days depending on the kind of construction project they are considering. So the bottom line is that if you do not get started soon, you miss an entire construction period in the northern part of our country.

That is why it is imperative that these people know exactly how much money they can expect so they can budget for purposes of letting contracts and making plans on infrastructure. There are going to be projects that are going to require more than 1 year. The mayor of Watertown said she felt that it is going to take 2 to 3 years to deal with all the infrastructure problems that are out there.

So there is no doubt that we are not going to be able to deal with all of the problems we have right now. But we are going to be able to prioritize as soon as we know what the budget is. We are going to be able to let contracts. We are going to be able to address these needs one by one and make some effort at trying to resolve the most difficult priorities first—the most contentious and problematic issues that many of these people have to deal with.

So, Mr. President, I think it is so critical that we get on with this legislation, that we pass it, and that we take out the extraneous legislation.

I indicated that we would be more than happy—and I will repeat it again this morning—to work with leadership on both sides of the Congress and with our Republican colleagues in particular to design a way in which to have a time certain to consider these provisions with even an amount of time to be debated. We could even perhaps consider limitations on amendments—I am not suggesting that today—but perhaps even an amendment limitation in an effort to expedite consideration of these extraneous matters. The two most contentious, of course, are the census and the continuing resolution. They are the ones that we would want to find a way in which there could be a separate debate, a date, and a time certain for consideration and ultimately a vote. Let's do that. We can do it simultaneously with the passage of the disaster bill. But that would allow us the opportunity to move forward even this afternoon.

So I am hopeful that we can accomplish that. I am hopeful that perhaps now in the last 24 or 48 hours there can be a growing appreciation of the need to do something like that. I remain ready to sit down and discuss the matter with anybody who has another idea. Until that time, I think it is important that we begin working on this effort.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DORGAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, how much time remains on the amount of time allocated to the leader?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Ten minutes twenty seconds.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, let me follow on his remarks just for a few minutes and read a couple of letters from some folks because, after all, this is not some theory or some debate about policy. It is a discussion about how this issue impacts the lives of citizens. I thought it would be useful to read a couple of the letters that we have received.

This is a letter from a fellow in Grand Forks, ND, who writes, "The people here have no homes, no jobs, no other homes to go to. They have no toys, no bikes, no clothes, nor anything else, for that matter, for their children."

And he says, "You go home and take a break for Memorial Day recess," addressing that to the Congress. He said, "I am very angry at the way people are playing with the disaster relief bill and the lives of the people who need help now. They have no right to delay this bill or add to this bill. They want to add things, add more money. We will not have enough money even with this bill to repair our lives."

This is a letter from someone named Tim, who is a disaster victim. "I am a victim of the flood of 1997, as well as my family and friends and businesses who are victims of the flood. As you know, we have suffered a great deal, and as long as you continue to stall on the legislation for disaster relief our pain and suffering is prolonged. Perhaps you should visit here and see and feel the pain and devastation. Spend 3 days here and you will soon understand why people are depressed and why the anxiety level is extreme." He said, "We strive to help each other out in this country in times of need. Americans like to spread the burden of disaster among everyone. That is what it means and that is why it makes us a great country, and we need your help now. On behalf of my family, my wife, our two daughters, we need your support."

Rodney and Judy wrote this letter to the Congress and to the President. "We were evacuated from our homes on the 19th of April 1997. It sat under water for a period of 10 to 12 days with 56 inches of sewer and flood water on the main floor of our home. Currently the house is sitting empty because we are waiting on a bill to be passed by Congress providing flood relief. I am a staff sergeant in the Air Force. My wife and my child also happen to be from Grand Forks, North Dakota. We are proud of our community, and we hate to see it wasted as it is. Right now, even through all of the mess, I have my bags packed and am ready to go at a moment's notice to fight and possibly die for our country. That is our calling in the Air Force. But what Congress is doing to us really hurts. I still make a house payment for a home that sits empty." He said, "The home is getting worse day after day. I can't do anything but wait. Do you think this is fair? How did you enjoy your vacation

over the Memorial Day weekend? I spent mine fixing up, repairing, and helping my neighbors so that their homes can be lived in once again. I think you should come out here and spend a few days in the stink and the mud and the junk on the curbs and the streets. All we want is answers. Why is this taking so long? Stop playing games with the disaster bill and get it passed. We are tired of waiting for an issue that should have been taken care of long ago."

I mentioned earlier today of a call last evening when I was part of the vigil last night from midnight until 3 in the morning, a call from a man named Mark from Grand Forks, ND, whose wife is dying, whose home was flooded, whose family was separated, and who now, like thousands of others in Grand Forks, ND, waits for an answer. Mark is dealing with his wife's illness, with a family that is separated, with a natural disaster, and now he needs to deal with answers to the questions he has. "What about my future? What is going to happen to my community? How can I put my family and my life back together again?" And the answers are in this piece of legislation.

We still have people here who, as of last night, are making the case that this doesn't matter. "Nothing is being held up. It doesn't matter." FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, they say, has money in the pipeline. "Money is flowing. What are people complaining about?"

Anyone who asks that question has a responsibility to go to Grand Forks, ND, and peek through the tent flap of a tent on the front of a yard of a home that is destroyed where the family is now living, or knock on the door of a camper trailer that is parked in the yard of a home that is destroyed where a family is now living, or go to a shelter where a family now still lives, and ask them, "What is the hurry? Why are you so anxious?" Anyone who believes that there is money in the pipeline to do that needs to go talk to those folks, has a responsibility to go to talk to those folks, and then come back and stand on the floor of the Senate or the House and say, "There is no emergency here." And, if they do that, then they will not be telling the truth because they will have known better. They will have known differently.

This is urgent. The thousands of people this morning who woke up not in their own bed, not in their own homes, know it is urgent. They woke up somewhere else—another town, another home, living with a relative, in a shelter, in a motel, in a camper trailer, and, yes, a tent. They know it is urgent. Yet, day after day we continue to hear people in and around this Capitol justifying the stalling on the disaster bill by saying, "Well, it is not urgent. There is nothing in this bill that will provide urgently needed relief. This is for long-term relief." It is fundamentally false; wrong.

Will Rogers said—I quoted him the other day—about someone, "You know,

it is not what he knows that bothers me so much. It is what he says he knows for sure that just ain't so." We have people who apparently say they know for sure this aid isn't urgent, and they ought to know it ain't so. If they do not know that, they have a responsibility to become informed.

As long as I serve in this Congress I will never attach a controversial unrelated amendment to a disaster bill because it is unfair to do it. I will not do that. And I hope others will not do it in the future either.

In fact, I think we ought to change the rules of the Senate, and I will intend to propose such a change. I expect it will be hard to get adopted. But I think we ought to change the rules of the Senate and say that on bills that are disaster bills, or emergency bills, you ought not be able to offer extraneous or unrelated or nongermane amendments. Will that be hard to get passed in this body? Of course, it will. But shouldn't there be some category of legislation that is an emergency that represents a response to a disaster that at least ought to be held aside and say, "All right, this is different. This is urgent, and you don't add extraneous controversial amendments to this?"

I think we ought to have a rule change to require that with respect to those select categories of legislation that represent urgent disaster or urgent emergency disaster relief.

I hope maybe today, after now nearly 3 additional weeks of delay, that we might be able to provide an answer to the victims of these disasters and that the answer would be that the generous amount of relief that has been worked on by both sides but now which has been locked up by the maneuvering of some, that generous amount of relief will now be made available to people to help them put their lives back together. If it is done now, if it is done in the next couple of hours, it can be signed into law this evening and the disaster aid will be available immediately.

If it is not done today, will it be done tomorrow? If not tomorrow, will it be next week, or next month? How long do disaster victims have to wait? How long do they have to wait and how many letters do we have to read? How many phone calls do we have to recount about people's lives which are being interrupted, families split, homes destroyed and lives in chaos because Congress has not done its job?

Let's hope this is resolved today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I make a point of order that a quorum is not present.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALLARD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOLUNTARY ENVIRONMENTAL SELF-AUDIT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, yesterday Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON, my colleague and friend, introduced S. 866, legislation that provides a necessary Federal standard regarding voluntary environmental self-auditing for states. There are nearly two dozen States which are experimenting with laws to encourage self-audits. These laws are aimed at increasing environmental protection and directing scarce enforcement resources toward the real bad actors. We need Federal legislation to make these state laws work, and Senator HUTCHISON has a balanced, fair approach.

I want to take this opportunity today to share with my colleagues how this legislative proposal will strengthen America's environmental policies. I will join Senator HUTCHISON as an active cosponsor to S. 866.

First, I would like to explain what voluntary environmental self-auditing is all about.

In the past 10 years, the number of environmental statutes and regulations that impose compliance obligations, and the corresponding civil and criminal penalties and sanctions for violations, have dramatically increased. In response to these developments, more and more companies are using environmental self-audit programs as a tool to ensure compliance.

Generally, an environmental audit is a means of reviewing a business in order to get a snapshot of its overall compliance with environmental laws and to troubleshoot for potential future problems. EPA defines an audit as "a systematic, documented, periodic and objective review by regulated entities of facility operations and practices related to meeting environmental requirements." Audits can include inspections of equipment to insure that permit requirements are being met; review of future and present risks of regulated and unregulated materials used at the facility; and surveys of the day-to-day operation of environmental management structure and resources. Some companies have compliance management systems that include day-to-day, even shift-to-shift, voluntary activities to assure compliance.

No State or Federal law requires companies to undertake comprehensive environmental self-auditing. This is just a good business practice initiated by companies that are taking extra steps to be in full compliance with environmental law.

There are no guidelines or standard practices—audits vary considerably because they must accommodate the individual needs of companies or specific facilities to be most effective. They are typically much more extensive than an inspection by a State or Federal regulator because they are done more often and because companies simply know much more about their operations and permit obligations than regulators do. A company conducting its own audit